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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 ASUNCION 001324

SIPDIS

STATE FOR WHA/BSC, WHA/EPSC
ALSO FOR EB/IEC
STATE PASS TO USTR FOR BETH LEIER
USAID FOR AA/LAC ADOLFO FRANCO
TREASURY FOR OSIA MAUREEN WAFER
COMMERCE ITA SARAH COOK
NSC FOR MIKE DEMPSEY
SOUTHCOM FOR POLAD
US SOUTHERN COMMAND MIAMI, FLORIDA

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [SENV](#) [ETRD](#) [ECON](#) [PA](#)

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR SHOWCASES ASUNCIONS BIODIVERSITY,
PROMOTES ECO-TOURISM

Summary

1. On Oct. 6, Ambassador hosted members of local conservation organization Guyra Paraguay, along with environmentalists, businesspeople and media representatives to observe the wealth of flora and fauna contained within the 10-acre Embassy compound. The event featured the debut of two fold-out guides entitled Birds of the U.S. Embassy Gardens and Birds of Asuncion, which each guest received upon arrival. Guests participated in a bird-watching tour of the compound followed by a presentation on the types of birds and plants present in the Embassy gardens. The event, which also highlighted the potential for bird-watching tourism, and the guides continue to generate significant interest in the local community. End Summary.

Embassy as Bird Sanctuary

2. The October 6 Biodiversity Event took place in two segments. A selected number of guests were invited to a 6:30 a.m. bird-watching tour within the Residence gardens. Aiding them were trained staff from local birdlife conservation group Guyra Paraguay, together with a recently published pamphlet entitled The Birds of the U.S. Embassy Gardens. Guyra Paraguay published the fold-out guides with support from the Embassy, and they are designed to educate Embassy staff and visitors about the more than 60 species of birds that inhabit the compound. The Embassy also assisted with the publication of a companion guide entitled Birds of Asuncion, which was also distributed to guests. The format of the newly-published guides enabled guests to note which species of birds they spotted as they walked through the garden. Among those invited for the bird-watching portion of the event were representatives of both the national and municipals governments, local environmental NGOs, journalists from local media outlets and private reserve and land owners interested in wildlife conservation.

Capitalizing on Asuncions Biodiversity

3. Ambassador welcomed the birdwatchers and additional guests to the 8:00 a.m. portion of the event by commenting on Asuncions rich variety of wildlife. Referring to the Embassys wealth of bird species, he remarked: These birds and hundreds of species more are seen in and around the city of Asuncion, which must make it one of the most diverse cities for avifauna in the world. Ambassador said that he hopes that local journalists will help to spread the word about Asuncions botanical wealth in trees and other plants, which create habitats for the many types of birds that inhabit the city. He noted that both the habitats and the avifauna can be enjoyed not only by Asuncions residents but by tourists, and that bird watching tourism is a major income earner for a number of countries, including Ecuador, Panama and Costa Rica.

4. Staff for Guyra Paraguay presented guests with presentations focused on the birds and plants of the Embassy gardens. They noted Asuncions unique geographic position in the bend of the Paraguay River, and that the trees along most of the citys streets create unique corridors for bird movement and observation. They pointed to the Bay of Asuncion as an important stopover point for birds migrating from the north and south of the Continent. The event concluded with a round of applause for Guyras

guides, and for the Embassys chief groundskeeper, whose staff continues to refine the Missions gardens.

Sharing Paraguays Biodiversity

15. The Biodiversity Event received coverage in the local media, and Guyra hopes to maintain interest by distributing copies of the new bird guides to approximately 50 local NGOs, as well as copies to approximately 300 schools within the municipality of Asuncion. Guyra plans to make staff available for school presentations about plants and birdlife within the city. The organization is also in communication with tourism officials regarding opportunities to market Asuncion as an ecotourism destination.

Comment

16. Posts biodiversity event presented a unique opportunity to unite a diverse group of participants, all of whom whom believe in the benefits of preserving Asuncions natural heritage. For conservationists, the Embassy gardens represent an example of the types of green spaces that can be preserved within a city setting. Guyra Paraguays staff remain grateful for the added attention their organization received under posts auspices. For local hoteliers and businesspeople, the citys rich plant and birdlife represent an untapped resource capable of attracting tourists, an added incentive to support Guyra and other local environmental conservation efforts.

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